

avoiding tobacco, knowing their family history, and getting regular screenings from the doctor.

My Administration remains committed to the fight against cancer. In 2005, the National Cancer Institute and the National Human Genome Research Institute launched the Cancer Genome Atlas, a revolutionary research project to help scientists understand the genetic sources of cancer. The discoveries from this project have the potential to bring about rapid advances in cancer research. And last year the National Institutes of Health invested more than \$5 billion in cancer research.

We are making progress. Cancer related deaths have declined for 2 consecutive years. Thirty years ago, there were only 3 million cancer survivors, and today there are more than 10 million.

During Cancer Control Month, we remember those who have lost their lives to cancer. And we commend the determination, courage, and strength of cancer survivors. Our Nation is grateful for medical professionals, researchers, family members, and friends who support cancer patients. Their dedication to these individuals is a reflection of the true spirit of America. Our country will continue the fight against cancer until it is won.

In 1938, the Congress of the United States passed a joint resolution (52 Stat. 148; 36 U.S.C. 103) as amended, requesting the President to issue an annual proclamation declaring April as "Cancer Control Month."

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 2007 as Cancer Control Month. I encourage citizens, government agencies, private businesses, nonprofit organizations, and other interested groups to join in activities that will increase awareness about the steps Americans can take to prevent and control cancer.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-ninth day of March, in the year of our Lord two thousand seven, and of the Independence of the United

States of America the two hundred and thirty-first.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 9:23 a.m., April 2, 2007]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 30, and it will be published in the *Federal Register* on April 3.

Remarks During a Visit to Walter Reed Army Medical Center

March 30, 2007

Thank you. Please be seated. Thank you all for joining me. Every time I come to Walter Reed, my spirits are lifted. They're first lifted by the soldiers and marines who are recovering from some very tough wounds. I had the honor of pinning the Purple Heart on quite a few people today, and I am always impressed by their resolve and their commitment to the country. Every time I come to Walter Reed, I'm also impressed by the caregivers—the docs, the nurses, the people who spend many hours trying to heal those who have been wounded in service to our country.

The soldiers and marines stay here only for a few months, but the compassion they receive here stays with them for a lifetime. And so on behalf of a grateful nation, I do want to thank our docs and our nurses and caregivers for providing extraordinary health care to the people who wear the uniform. I know full well that the work you do is behind the scenes. In other words, you don't get a lot of glory for what you do, but you certainly do from the family members who first come here, and they see their loved one on a bed, wondering whether or not that person will ever walk again. And then, 6 months later, the body is returning, and the spirit is strong—the person is up and moving around. The family and the soldier is impressed by that care.

Americans must understand that the problems recently uncovered at Walter Reed were not the problems of medical care. The quality of care at this fantastic facility is great, and it needs to remain that way. Independent analysis have given extremely high marks for

the quality of care here. In other words, this isn't my assessment, nor is it the assessment of people I have talked to—the families, although that's what they believe. It is also the assessment of a joint commission, which accredits thousands of American hospitals. And this commission has given Walter Reed the highest possible rating, a gold seal of approval.

Recently, the commission performed a surprise inspection. In other words, they didn't give a bunch of notice; they showed up and verified the high quality of care here. I want to congratulate you for what you're doing.

The problems at Walter Reed were caused by bureaucratic and administrative failures. The system failed you, and it failed our troops. And we're going to fix it.

I met some of the soldiers who had been housed in Building 18. I was disturbed by their accounts of what went wrong. It is not right to have someone volunteer to wear our uniform and not get the best possible care. I apologize for what they went through, and we're going to fix the problem.

And that's exactly what this Government is going to do. We're not going to be satisfied until everybody gets the kind of care that their folks and families expect. And that's what I expect. And we've taken important steps to achieve the objective.

First, Defense Secretary Gates has insisted on accountability in the military command. He made changes in leadership. He made tough decisions, because he, like me, demands results. I welcome General Schoomaker, but I also welcome General Tucker. Tucker is not a doc. As General Schoomaker informed me, he is a "bureaucracy buster." His job is to make sure that the bureaucracy does not get in the way of making sure every soldier, marine, and their families get the best possible care. And I welcome you to the command, and thank you.

Secretary Gates, as I said, has approved a non-medical deputy commander—that's Tucker. Building 18 has been closed. We're fixing that which needs to be fixed, including, interestingly enough, putting a new roof on it. The patients from Building 18 have been transferred into Abrams Hall, and I'm

pleased to report that living conditions there are of high quality.

We have formed three working groups to help address problems that may exist and may arise. I want to share some of what the—the strategy behind the working groups is, and that is, first, Gates established—Secretary Gates established an independent review group, and that was primarily to examine the conditions at Walter Reed and Bethesda. The group will recommend ways to ensure you have what you need to improve medical care.

I heard one recommendation, in other words, one of the care providers said, "Make sure we always have the best possible equipment; we want to be on the leading edge of technology, not the trailing edge." I agree completely. Those are the kinds of things that Secretary Gates's commission is going to be looking into.

Veterans Affairs Secretary Nicholson is leading a task force of Cabinet officers to identify potential gaps in the services our wounded troops receive as they return from the battlefield. In other words, we want all hands on deck here at the Federal level to make sure that health care is as good as it possibly can be. I'm not talking about the health care in the operating room; I'm talking about the bureaucracies that may prevent good health care from being delivered.

Finally, Bob Dole and Donna Shalala will chair a bipartisan Presidential Commission on care for our wounded warriors. They will conduct a comprehensive view of the entire system for providing physical and emotional care to service men and women injured in this war. They will make sure that that person gets high-quality care from the time they suffer their wounds through their return to civilian life.

We want to make sure, for example, that any transfer from the Defense Department to the Veterans Affairs Department is smooth and that there's not bureaucratic delay or obstacles in the way of making sure that we can report to our fellow citizens that people are getting the best possible health care.

I want to thank those who are working in these groups, and I'm looking forward to getting their recommendations, because I want

to make sure our military families can be assured that their loved ones will get the very best.

This military system of ours, when you really think about it, just across the country, it's very complex, and it's large. Yet there's nothing complex about what we owe our troops; we owe them the best. That's what you believe here at Walter Reed. I have seen the care and dedication that you give on a daily basis. I just came from the therapy rooms, the physical therapy and the vocational therapy rooms. I see people patiently working with a wounded soldier on how to pick up cards and play cards with a new prosthesis. It's just hours of help all because the people here recognize each human being matters, each person counts, and each person has endless possibilities, even though they may have received terrible wounds on the battlefield.

None of the problems that we have uncovered can overshadow the great work you do here. That's what you have to know. It's a special calling to serve those who serve our country. It requires a unique person to come here on a daily basis and to heal the hurts of those who served our country.

And so our Nation is grateful, and I'm proud to be your Commander in Chief.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:12 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Brig. Gen. Michael S. Tucker, USA, deputy commanding general, Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Notice—Intention To Enter Into a Free Trade Agreement With Panama
March 30, 2007

Consistent with section 2105(a)(1)(A) of the Trade Act of 2002, I have notified the Congress of my intention to enter into a free trade agreement with the Republic of Panama.

Consistent with section 2105(a)(1)(A) of that Act, this notice shall be published in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

The White House,
March 30, 2007.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:26 a.m., March 30, 2007]

NOTE: This notice was published in the *Federal Register* on April 2.

**Letter to Congressional Leaders
Transmitting a Notice of Intention
To Enter Into a Free Trade
Agreement With Panama**
March 30, 2007

Dear Madam Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Consistent with section 2105(a)(1)(A) of the Trade Act of 2002, (Public Law 107-210; the "Trade Act"), I am pleased to notify the Congress of my intention to enter into a free trade agreement with the Republic of Panama.

The United States-Panama Trade Promotion Agreement (the "Agreement") will generate export opportunities for U.S. farmers, ranchers, and companies, help create jobs in the United States, and help American consumers save money while offering them more choices. The Agreement will also benefit the people of Panama by providing economic opportunity and by strengthening democracy.

Consistent with the Trade Act, I am sending this notification at least 90 days in advance of signing the Agreement. My Administration looks forward to working with the Congress in developing appropriate legislation to approve and implement this Agreement.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate.